Chocolate Truffle Cakes with Ganache

Red roses are nice, but a home-baked sweet says love in a special way. Pastry Chef Alex Flores from Napa Rose at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa artfully shows us the way it's done with his mini-chocolate truffle cakes, and we share his recipe below.

Just give yourself plenty of time to wow your Valentine. You can make the ganache a day ahead, as it needs plenty of time to cool. The truffle cakes are best straight from the oven, served warm with your favorite ice cream (they serve it with cherry vanilla at Napa Rose). Just make sure you use a good-quality dark chocolate for a taste to remember.

Serves 8

Ganache
4 ounces Scharffen Berger bittersweet chocolate
1/2 cup heavy cream

Truffle Cakes
1/2 cup plus 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened (extra for ramekins)
6 1/2 ounces Scharffen Berger bittersweet chocolate, chopped fine
5 large eggs, room temperature, separated
1/2 cup sugar, divided (extra for ramekins)
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, sifted
Favorite ice cream, for serving

For ganache:

1. Place chocolate in a medium heatproof bowl. Bring cream to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Pour boiling cream over chopped chocolate. Slowly stir in a circular motion with a rubber spatula until all chocolate is melted, about 2 minutes.
2. Let sit at room temperature until ganache cools to 70°F. Meanwhile, make truffle cakes.

For chocolate truffle cakes:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly butter bottom and sides of 8 individual (3/4 cup) ramekins. Coat thinly with sugar and shake out excess. Set aside.
2. Prepare a double boiler and bring water to a simmer over low heat. Place butter and 6 1/2 ounces chocolate in the top of the double boiler and gently stir until melted.
3. Whisk egg yolks and 1/4 cup sugar in a large mixing bowl for 3 to 4 minutes or until smooth and slightly thickened. Stir in flour.
4. Ladle a small amount of melted chocolate into egg yolk mixture and whisk to combine. Add another ladle of chocolate into egg yolk mixture and continue to whisk. Once the temperature of the egg yolk mixture has been warmed, add remaining chocolate to egg yolks and vigorously whisk. Set aside.

5. Combine egg whites and 1 tablespoon sugar in stand mixer; whip on medium speed until soft peaks form.
6. Slowly add an additional 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar while continuing to whip egg whites. Increase speed to high and slowly add remaining 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar. Whip another 3 to 4 minutes or until stiff peaks form.
7. Gently fold egg whites into chocolate mixture, being careful not to overwork mixture.
8. Divide batter equally among prepared ramekins, filling 3/4 full. Place on baking sheet and bake for 9 to 10 minutes or until tops are puffy, but center still soft. Do not overbake.
9. While cakes are baking, make the ganache: Finely chop remaining 4 ounces of chocolate.
10. Cut around edges of cakes using a small knife to loosen. Carefully invert cakes onto a serving plate. Top each with 1 generous tablespoon of ganache and serve immediately with favorite ice cream.

Cook's Notes:

If you cannot find Scharffen Berger Chocolate, you may substitute Valrhona Manjari chocolate or a high quality 58 percent bittersweet chocolate.

Make sure your small metal bowl is very clean and dry before attempting to whip egg whites to stiff peaks.